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HAGIOGRAPHICAL ESSAY.

Having frequently referred, in my lectures, to various readings found in the Manuscripts, ancient versions, and writings of the primitive Fathers, I judge it necessary to give a brief account of them; which cannot fail to be interesting to many of my readers. All the learned well know, that we have not the divine oracles in their primeval language or purity. I shall therefore exhibit a concise view of the language, Mss. and versions of the sacred scriptures.

THE HEBREW.

The books of the Old Testament were all written in Hebrew, except a few chapters in Ezra, Nehemiah, and Daniel. Almost all writers, who have treated of the Hebrew tongue, would persuade us that it was the original language of the whole world; but Gregory Nissen and others, have reprobated the idea as a vain conceit of the Jews. Notwithstanding the proper names and their significations in the scriptures, seem to indicate that it was the primeval language of all mankind. It was used, says Ainsworth, by all the world till the days of Phaleg the son of Heber, and the building of the tower of Babel, 1757 years from the Creation and 100 after the flood. See Gen. 10. 25, and 11. 9. It seems probable that the original language of mankind, was composed of monosyllables, each of which had a distinct ideal meaning. Now if we strip the Hebrew of its vowel points, affixes, and suffixes, it remains that pure simple, monosyllabic language till the present time; for almost all the radical words of that language consist of only three letters. As to the vowel points it is clear that great extravagances have been committed both by their advocates and opposers. Appeals have been made both to the reading of the Septuagint and the Greek pronunciation of the Hebrew, in the Hexapla of Origen; but whoever looks into Origen or the Septuagint, with eyes unjaundiced by prejudice, will be satisfied that the pronunciation exhibited, is very different from any scheme ever proposed by those, who reject the use of the points. The most rational opinion on the subject is, that the vowel points are the invention of the Masoretic or Talmudic doctors, who composed the great synagogue, existing from the days of Ezra till the tenth

century ; and that the vowel points were composed by these Jewish Doctors before the time of Christ, with a view to preserve the pronunciation of the Hebrew, after it ceased to be spoken as a living language ! All who wish to read the Hebrew bible with critical exactness, will be abundantly rewarded, for their additional labor, in studying the points, so far as to enable them to read after the Rabbinical method. After the confusion of languages, the original is supposed to have remained in the family of Heber, whence it derived its name. It continued to be cultivated by the Hebrews or Jews till the Babylonian captivity, and was therefore called the Jewish language. Is. 36. 11. During the captivity the Jews forgot their language, and learned the Chaldee : hence the holy language ceased, and the impure or mixed Hebrew came in its place. From that time, the Hebrew characters were supplanted by the Chaldaic ; and are no longer to be found, except in the Samaritan Pentateuch.— Though the Jews might not wholly forget their language during the seventy years' captivity in Babylon, yet their children would naturally learn the Chaldee from the people with whom they sojourned. Accordingly on the return from Babylon, when Ezra read the Law in Hebrew, the Levites gave the sense in Chaldee ; because the pure Hebrew was unintelligible to the greater part of the congregation. Nehemiah, 8. 7, 8. However, the prophets still cultivated the Hebrew, for Ezekiel wrote his prophecies in Hebrew during the captivity ; as did also the prophet Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, after their return. Being restored to their own land, Judea becoming a province of Syria, they would again as naturally learn the Syriac : and consequently their language would be subjected to another change. The Hebrew was entirely lost as a living language, and succeeded by a mixture of Syriac and Chaldee, which was afterwards known by the title of the Syro-Chaldaic. As this was the language of the Jews of Palestine, in which our Lord and his apostles proclaimed the glad tidings of great joy ; whenever therefore we read of the Hebrew in the New-Testament, we should understand the Syro-Chaldaic, and not the pure Hebrew, for it had long ceased to be oral, or intelligible to any people as a living language. Let it be clearly understood, however, that the Hebrew, Chaldee, and Syriac are rather dialects of the same, than different languages. The Chaldee character is the most fair and easy, and in it the Hebrew bible is both written and printed. They who desire to see the great affinity of the Hebrew, Syriac, and Chaldee, would do well to consult the Chaldaic Grammar of Hottinger.

The only writings extant in the Hebrew, are the books of the old Testament. The Talmuds are written in the mixed or Rabbinical Hebrew. The Targums are Chaldee paraphrases on the books of the old Testament by different Jewish Rabbies. That of Onkelos is on the law ; that of Joseph on the Hagiography ; that of Jonathan on

the Prophets: all of them before Christ. The Targum of Jerusalem written on parts of the Law, is in corrupt Chaldee. At the return from Babylon many of the Jews remained, and many more resorted to them, during the calamities which beset those which returned. Hence there were two great Rabbinical schools one at Babylon and another at Jerusalem, and afterwards at Tiberias. Both these have given Talmuds, or collections of Jewish traditions, said to be the oral law, which Moses taught the elders of the great Sanhedrim. The Talmud consists of two parts, the Mishna and Gemara. The Mishna is the Text, and is a comment on the five books of Moses, compiled from innumerable traditions by Juda Hakkodesh about the year 150. The Gemara is a comment on the Mishna or text of the oral law. The Talmud of Jerusalem is believed to have been made in the third, and the Babylonian in the fifth century; but they are in very corrupt Hebrew. The Babylonian is preferred, probably because most bulky. There is a fine Amsterdam edition in twelve great folios! Ohe Jam satis est! See a succinct account of the rites and ceremonies of the Jews by David, Levi, and Basnage's *Histoire de Juifs*.

THE GREEK.

The scriptures of the New-Testament were written in Greek except the Gospel of Matthew. & probably the epistle to the Hebrews, which, in the opinion of many learned men, were written in Hebrew or rather Syro-Chaldaic, for the use of Jewish Christians. The language of the Greeks, has, perhaps never been excelled by any other, in copiousness, strength, beauty, and harmony. Every adequate judge will accede to the opinion of Horace,

Graius ingenium, Graius dedit ore rotundo musa loqui.

But as it happens to the language of every people, who are divided into several districts, so it fared with the Greek; it was greatly affected by provincial dialects. The principal of these were the Attic, Ionic, Doric, Æolic, and Macedonic. The Attic most frequently occurs in the New Testament. Still more unfortunately for this precious volume, the Greek had fallen from its primitive elegance and purity, before the Septuagint version was made, or the books of the New Testament were composed. The first alteration in the Greek was effected by the Macedonians about the time of Alexander, when the phrases and idioms of that people became nationalized at Athens. Being subjected to the Macedonians, and the different states of Greece blended together in one great community, the various provincial dialects yielded to the *Communis Lingua*, which soon after became the general language of composi-

tion. This *Koine Dialectos*, or *common language*, says Bentley, was never at any time or place the popular idiom; but a language of the learned, as the Latin among Europeans. The style of the Greek is found most pure and correct, in those writers, who preceded, or were contemporary with Demosthenes; but after him the alteration is very perceptible. During the civil war, which followed the death of Alexander, and the revolutions of Asia and Greece, men of letters flowed to Alexandria in Egypt, and were liberally patronized by the Ptolemies. The Greek tongue became predominant in business and commerce, and was soon associated with the Coptic. The Septuagint version, principally made by Jews of Alexandria, presents singular forms of speech; being written in the Alexandrine dialect, which was a mixture of the Macedonic, Jewish, and Egyptian. In explaining the phraseology of the septuagint and New Testament, critics have frequently drawn their examples from writers, who lived under the Lagidæ and Seleucidæ: for as some of these monarchs had invited the Jews to settle in the cities which they had built, and others had encouraged them to reside in Egypt, the intercourse between the Jews and Greeks became very great in all the commercial towns; consequently a mixture of the Greek and Hebrew idioms naturally ensued. It also appears from the terms *Syro-Macedones*, *Syro-Hellenes*, that the Greek had been established in Syria, during the Macedonian conquests. The language of the Romans was also introduced with their conquests, and the Greek was corrupted even in countries, where it was the vernacular tongue. The Latin also, during the government of the Romans, became familiar to the people of Syria: and hence we find in different parts of the New Testament, not only latin words, but also latin phraseology. The impossibility of rendering some Hebrew words by corresponding Greek terms, introduced new words into the Septuagint; and the doctrines and usages of Christianity, affixed new meanings to many terms already in use. This corrupted mixture of various dialects and foreign idioms, called the Hellenistic dialect, is that in which the Greek scriptures are found to exist.

In the Hellenistic style the sentences are generally shorter, more simple and uniform in their structure, than they are in classical Greek; but greatly deficient in elegance and variety. Such obscurity arises from the Hellenistic idioms in the New-Testament, that no man can truly understand its language or meaning in many places, without a knowledge of the Hebrew. Thus the Hebrew, having only two tenses, a past and a future, and these being often substituted, one for another; the Hellenistic writers, not availing themselves of the variety of tenses in the Greek, use frequently the past for the present or future; and the future in the sense of the present or past. In Matt. xxiii. 2, John i. 26, are examples of the

past for the present. Isa. ix. 6, and Heb. ii. 7, are examples of the past for the future, and Luke xxiii. 6, an example of the future for the present. Also in the Hiphil form of the verb, the Hebrew represents the subject of the verb as causing the action to be performed by another. Matt. v. 45, and Luke xi. 53, are beautiful examples of this Hebraism. On the same principle *Hudor zon*, John iv. 10, *artos zon*, John vi. 51, should be rendered *life-giving water*; *life-giving bread*. Likewise Heb. iv. 8, if Joshua *katepausen*, had caused them to rest. In a word, such a fountain of light flows from the knowledge of the original languages, upon the mind of the commentator of the sacred text, that the conscience of every minister of God's word, should smite him, if he rest in voluntary ignorance.

THE MANUSCRIPTS.

All intelligent persons must know, that before the invention of Printing in the fifteenth century, the sacred scriptures, like all other writings, must have existed only in Manuscript: or by oral tradition. If by oral tradition, they must have been at some time reduced to manuscript. These records written on paper or parchment, being considered a revelation of God, would be frequently transcribed, and the copies greatly multiplied. These writings, like all others, must have been exposed to various errors arising from transcription. If we admit that ten errors might arise in the first, twenty in the second; and so on in proportion, the number after transcription one hundred times, would amount to thousands: consequently the last manuscript would differ from the first in several thousand places. *These differences* we call VARIOUS READINGS. Dr. Bentley, asserts that if we choose a MS. and a second, wherever we please; the second will contain a *thousand variations from the first*. This we judge to be a safe calculation; and suspect that the most careful scribe even in the present day, will not write over a volume so large as the old or New Testament, without varying from the original in more than a thousand places. Wherever Jews and Christians were dispersed, they would carry with them copies of the Jewish or Christian Scriptures; and these copies would be more or less accurate, as they were less or more remote from the Autographs of the sacred writings; or as they had been transcribed by more or less skilful persons. But if a MS. were carelessly copied, it became the source of numerous errors in future transcriptions. When the Autographs of the Apostles were lost, and contentions arose in the churches, there being no standard of comparison party zeal would naturally lead the transcribers to multiply alterations, designedly to promote the creed of their favourite sect. Hence the number of various readings in the MSS. would become prodigious; & the corrup-

tions more dangerous and lamentable. If a scribe should obtain two or more MSS. and collate them, for the purpose of giving a more accurate copy than either, he would naturally be led to *alter from conjecture*, where the MSS. differed. Hence it would soon occur that no MS. would contain a fac-simile of the Apostolical writings: but the genuine text of the New Testament, would be found scattered among all the MSS. the less mutilated in proportion as they were near the original, or faithfully transcribed. Like all other writings, an accurate text can only be obtained by a careful, long and laborious comparison of all the MSS. and out of the various readings; selecting that which is commended by the highest authority. And the authority of the readings must depend on the value of the MSS. in which they are found; and the value of the MSS. on the nearness of their connexion with the originals; and the degree of accuracy with which they have been written.

Manuscripts in the large uncial character are preferred; and are marked in the catalogues by the large Roman capitals: Of these, A, B, C, D, and M, are the best.

A. The Alexandrine MS, written in the fourth century, presented by Cyril, bishop of Alexandria, to Charles first; and preserved in the British Museum. It contains the Septuagint, which has been edited by Dr. Grabe; and the New Testament, edited by Woide.— This MS agrees to a great extent with the Syriac, Coptic, and Ethiopic versions. It agrees with the Alexandrine edition in the epistles of Paul; with the Byzantine, in the Gospels; and with the Western, in the Acts and Catholic epistles.

B. The Vatican at Rome, written in the fourth century, containing the Septuagint and New Testament. It agrees with the manuscripts D, and L; and in the opinion of Michaelis, is the most ancient and valuable MS. in existence.

C. The Ephrem, so called from Ephrem the Syrian, who flourished in the fourth century; the MS. however, is supposed not to be older than the seventh century. It is preserved in the Royal library at Paris.

D. The Cambridge MS. presented by Beza, containing the Gospels and acts, and the old Itala translation. Wetstein fixes the date of this MS. to the fifth century. It is believed to be the most important MS. of the Gospels. It agrees frequently with the vulgate; and in many of its distinguished readings, with the Syriac, Coptic, and Sahidic.

M. Stephens' or the Royal MS. at Paris, of the 7th or 8th century. Michaelis considers it invaluable. These five MSS. are perhaps worth any other fifty in existence.

Critics have classed the MSS. and versions into three editions, or revisions:

1. The Eastern or Byzantine edition, supported in Paul's epistles

by the Alexandrine Ms. the Mss of Mt. Athos, the Russian version, & the citations of ecclesiastical writers in Greece and Asia Minor, during the fourth and fifth centuries. This edition agrees more nearly than the others, with the modern received Text.

2. The Alexandrine, including the Vatican, Ephrem, and other valuable Mss. the Coptic, Ethiopic, and other ancient versions: and is supported by the quotations of Clement and Origen, in the second and third centuries.

3. The Western, including the vulgate, and old Italic versions; and is supported by the Vatican in Matthew's Gospel; the Sahidic, and the quotations of the Latin Fathers.

Hence it will be easily perceived, that there are only two other sources, besides the existing Mss. for estimating the authority of the sacred Text; the ancient versions, and the exceedingly numerous quotations of the primitive Fathers. These versions and quotations, furnish evidence of the genuine reading of the early Mss. from which they were made; and which were of much greater antiquity, than any Mss. which we now possess. The whole authority of the readings primarily depended on the Mss. But seeing the Autographs and early Mss. are lost; the present manuscript reading, confirmed by the testimony of the ancient Versions and Fathers, is the sole authority, which should be regarded by an editor of the sacred Scriptures.

THE VERSIONS.

The versions are translations of the scriptures, from the original into other languages. All versions before the art of printing must have been made from some Mss. and consequently could only be a transcript of such Mss. as were used by the translators. But, as the Mss. differed among themselves, so the versions made from them, must differ also, according to the Mss. from which they were taken. Hence both Mss. and versions contain various readings; but the most ancient Mss. and versions, and the most carefully written, will approximate the nearest to the original Autographs.— But as all the manuscripts and versions of different countries differ in their readings, it is evident they have been formed from different Mss. Some of the versions are of much greater antiquity than the oldest Mss. we now possess; and are therefore inestimably valuable, seeing they tend to show us the state of the Mss. at the time they were written. The principal versions are the Greek, Syriac, Latin, Coptic, Ethiopic, Armenian, Arabic and Gothic.

THE SEPTUAGINT, is the most notable of the Greek translations; & has ever been considered of the highest importance by all competent judges. It is called the Septuagint, because it was partly com-

posed by the seventy Jewish elders, who constituted the Alexandrine sanhedrim; or under their inspection, two hundred and eighty-five years before the Christian *Æra*. The five books of Moses, are much better translated, than any other part of the Septuagint; and are thought to be, exclusively, the work of the seventy. The only instance of false Greek, Gen. viii. 22, is found in a correct state, *hemera hai nux*, in several Mss. collated by Holmes. The other books are supposed to have been translated by different persons, at different times; and the whole version finished about one hundred and fifty years before Christ. It is certainly manifest from the frequent quotations made by Christ and his Apostles, that a Greek version of the Old Testament was in general use and esteem at the commencement of the Christian dispensation: and the references of our Lord and his Apostles, to the Septuagint, whenever they cite the Old Testament, has stamped indelible honor on the Greek version. Indeed it must stand as the first and unrivalled copy of the sacred Scriptures, for being made at a very early period, the Mss. of the Hebrew text, must have been in a much higher state of purity, than they could have been, many centuries afterwards. Moreover, where it differs from the Hebrew, it generally preserves what we have reason to prefer, as the ancient and genuine readings; for even where the translators did not understand their author, they commonly show what they found in his text, by the verbal closeness of their imitation. The Septuagint is a most valuable key to the Scriptures of the Old Testament; and its general accuracy greatly facilitates the acquisition of the Hebrew tongue. Nor is it valuable, only as an illustration of the Old Testament; for it also contributes to illustrate the New: whose penmen writing in the same language, referring to the Original, using the same style with the 70 translators, often quoting this version, with which they were intimately acquainted, and evidently held in great esteem. Hence it necessarily follows that the one class of writings, should throw the clearest and strongest light on the other. Notwithstanding we have to lament, that Origen, in his edition of the Septuagint, admitting the exclusive integrity of the Hebrew copies, as maintained by the Rabbies, interpolated such words as were wanting in the 70. Soon after three editions were taken from Origen: the first by Lucian, a presbyter of Antioch; the second by Eusebius, which prevailed in Syria or Palestine; and the third by Hesychius, which obtained in Egypt. Though all taken from Origen's Hexapla, they differed among themselves, but Lucian's edition was judged the most correct, being most free from the interpolations of Origen. The original Septuagint, then fell into disuse, and all the Mss. in existence of the Septuagint, are derived from Origen, Lucian, Hesychius, and Eusebius. O, simple, primitive Christians, ye fell an easy prey to the crafty assumptions of the Jewish Priests!

ORIGEN'S HEXAPLA was one of the greatest efforts ever made to illustrate, dignify and establish sacred Scripture. It may be truly called the chef d'œuvre of Christianity, till the seventeenth century. It was called *Hexapla* or *sixfold*, because it consisted of six columns, containing six different Greek versions of the Hebrew bible. Epiphanius calls it *Octapla*, signifying that it had eight columns; which indeed it had, counting both the Hebrew and Greek. If we credit Montfaucon, it made sixty large volumes. In the first column he placed the Hebrew Text, according to the Rabbinical copies of the third century. In the second he put the same hebrew text written in Greek characters; which tends to show the pronunciation of the Hebrew, at that time. In the next four columns he placed the versions of Aquila, Theodotion, Symmachus, and the Septuagint.—Aquila, about the year 130, made his version, which was so extremely literal that Jerome says it was a good dictionary of the Hebrew words. Theodotion's version was made A. D. 170 and that of Symmachus about the year 200: both of which were also very literal, but not so much so as that of Aquila. As the above three translators were Ebionites, or Jewish Christians, they were suspected of favoring the Jewish mode of interpretation; but we cannot say, the charge has been substantiated. Where Origen met words in the Septuagint, which were not in the Hebrew, he prefixed an obelisk, signifying that they should be rejected: and when he found words in the Hebrew that were not in the Septuagint, he supplied them; and prefixed an asterisk intimating that they should be received. These marks, however, were soon neglected by subsequent transcribers. The Greek versions which occupied his seventh and eighth columns, were discovered in the beginning of the third century, the one at Jericho, and the other at Nicopolis.

THE SYRIAC VERSION is the most valuable of all the translations of the New Testament in existence. The very learned and critical Wakefield says "this inestimable version would be ill-exchanged for all the Mss. of the Greek Testament in the Universe." I speak of the ancient literal version called the *Peshito*, which contains the books of the New Testament, called *Homologomena*, or generally received. It is used by the Syrian Christians of every sect; & esteemed the brightest ornament of our holy religion. Written in the very language, and words of our blessed Master and his disciples, when we read, the very same ideas in syriac words, like the wine in the holy communion, seem to acquire an additional flavor, and become as honey from the comb. This most ancient version, was made either by some of the Apostles, or their immediate successors. The most satisfactory testimony induces us to believe that Matthew wrote his Gospel in Syriac, or Syro-Chaldaic. Postellus says all the Syrian Christians agree in an ancient tradition, that Mark made this translation of the books of the New Testament into his own language

the Syriac. Alsted and Maritini say it ought to be ascribed to the first christians at Antioch : and Father Simon well remarks, this version is esteemed by all sects, because made before all divisions.

The Christian religion was first published in Syria, which included Judea, Samaria, and Phenicia. The Syriac had remained the Language of that country from the confusion of tongues at Babel. This is manifest from Laban's title on the monument, Gen. 31, 47, and the words of the Jewish officers to Rabshekah, 2 Kings 18, 26. That the Syriac was the language of Judea in the time of our Lord, appears from the multitude of Syriac words in the New Testament, such as Elloi, Lamma, Sabacchani, Talitha, Cumi, Golgotha, Boanerges, Bar-Jona, Abba, Gabbatha, Aceldama, Maranatha, etc. The language of myriads of the first christians was Syriac ; and Justin Martyr, who as he tells us in his second apology, was a native of Neapolis in Samaria, assures us the writings of the Apostles and the Prophets were read every Sabbath in the christian assemblies.—According therefore to the testimony of Justin, this version must have been made at least as soon as the commencement of the second century. Another argument equally convincing for the great antiquity of this version is, the Cambridge Ms. probably the oldest in existence, often agrees with it where it differs from all others. Moreover this version wants the disputed epistles ; second and third John, 2d. Peter, Jude, and the Revelations. This is an evident proof that it was made either before these epistles were written or received. It also wants the history of the adulterous woman John 8.3—12 which is found in one of the oldest Mss. but is not mentioned by Origen, Clement Alexandrinus, Chrysostom, nor Nonnos who wrote a paraphrase, on John's Gospel. But the Dutch editor has basely inserted both this passage and 1 John 5, 7.

There is another SYRIAC VERSION called the PHILOXENIAN, made by Philoxenus, Bishop of Hierapolis about the year 508. It is very literal but not so elegant or valuable as the Peshito. Professor White has published a fine quarto edition of the Philoxenian version.

The Jews, fond of the old name, generally called the Syriac, Hebrew ; and the Fathers were too ignorant to know the difference.—Indeed neither the Fathers or even the sacred writers, preserve the distinction. Though Justin was a native of Palestine, yet in his dialogue with Trypho, he calls the same language both Syriac and Hebrew. Daniel calls it in one place Syriac, and in another Chaldee. "I distinguish them, says that eminent critic, Ludovicus de Dieu, because others do so, but there is no difference except in a few words, and in the punctuation." The Syriac and Chaldee are only two dialects of the Hebrew language, which have frequently been denominated by the name of the Parent. See Buxtorf's Chaldee and Syriac Grammar ; and the Harmonical Grammar of Ernestus Gerardus.

THE COPTIC made in the ancient language of lower Egypt, holds the second rank among the versions of the New Testament. It contains also the Pentateuch, besides the books of the New Testament; and though it be impossible now accurately to determine its age, yet it is very probable, that its respectable editor Dr. Wilkins is correct, in fixing the time at the close of the second century.

THE VULGATE is nearly a transcript of Jerome's version, with some alterations generally for the worse. We do not however, hesitate a moment to place it with all its imperfections, in the third rank among the versions of the new Testament. Jerome undertook this translation at the appointment of Pope Damasus, about the year 380. The ancient Italic, undoubtedly of the apostolic age and yielding to none in antiquity, had become very corrupt by frequent transcription, and other unfavorable incidents, and greatly needed revision. Jerome a Monk of Palestine, and the best Hebrician of all the Fathers, was perhaps the best qualified for such an arduous and important undertaking. Mosheim, pronounces Jerome's the best of all the Latin versions. He professes to have collated the Hebrew, Greek, and Latin Mss. but there is too great evidence that he was governed by the Latin alone. Since his days the Vulgate like several other versions, has been subjected to corruption and change. It is truly risible to hear the council of Trent pronounce this version authentic and immaculate, and at the same time, issue their orders for its revisal and correction. Notwithstanding let it not be understood that I now countenance an unprincipled sectarian prejudice, which goes to state that the Catholics corrupted this version to make it speak their peculiar dogmas. On the other hand I venture to affirm that there is double as much catholic corruption in any version extant among the popular sects of Protestants as can be found in the Latin Vulgate.

THE ETHIOPIC is a very ancient version made into that language for the use of the Abyssian Christians by Frumentius, their Bishop in the latter part of the fourth century.—It contains the Psalms, Minor Prophets, and the New-Testament. THE SAHIDIC is a very old but imperfect version, used in upper Egypt.

THE ARMENIAN VERSION made from the Syriac and Greek, about the beginning of the fifth century, would have been of great value, had it not been corrupted from the Latin.

THE GOTHIC VERSION was made by Ulphilus, Bishop of the Goths, in the year 360. An imperfect Ms. of this version was found in the abbey of Verden near Cologne, written in letters of silver, and therefore called *Codex Argenteus*. It was published by Francis Junius in 1665.

THE ARABIC VERSION is believed to have been made even later than the Koran, in the 7th century. It is notwithstanding a fine and valuable translation of the sacred scriptures into one of the most co-

pious languages in the world. This is the refined and universal language of Asia ; yet it is only a dialect of the Hebrew, though in many respects it far exceeds the Parent tongue. In our remarks on the Hebrew, Chaldee, Syriac and Arabic languages, we wish to avoid the Scylla & Charybdis of modern writers, some of whom represent them as nearly if not altogether the same ; and others speak of them as wholly dissimilar. Whoever has studied the Latin, Spanish, Italian, and French, can see the relationship of the Hebrew, Chaldee, Syriac, and Arabic. Though we are willing to acknowledge the affinity of the Asiatic languages to be still greater than that of the European. There are different editions of the Arabic version, but that of Erpenius is preferred. The Koran is one of the finest specimens of the Arabic language.

THE SLAVONIC AND PERSIAN VERSIONS are of a much later date than any of the above translations ; and therefore cannot be considered of great value, in determining the sacred reading. Still they are of use, as they show the readings of the Mss. whence they were taken.

THE FATHERS.

The eminent Bishops, Ecclesiastical writers and early commentators, have been so called from the conspicuous stations they held in the Christian Church. Their quotations of Scripture are so numerous, that nearly all the sacred volume lies repeatedly scattered throughout their works. From their citations, we learn what the Ms. reading was in their times. All the means, therefore, which we possess for obtaining an accurate edition of the scriptures, is a careful and laborious comparison of the Mss. versions, and quotations of the Greek and Latin Fathers. Preparations have been made for the Hebrew Bible by Kennicot and De Rossi of Parma, who have collated above a thousand Mss. from all parts of the world. For the Septuagint by Winchel, Bos. and Holmes, the last of whom, collated above 300 Greek Mss. thirty Greek Fathers, eleven editions of the Greek, and nearly thirty Syriac, Coptic, Armenian, Arabic, and Slavonic Mss. A still more complete apparatus has been furnished for the New Testament by the labors of Mill, Bengel, Wetstein, Birch, Alter, Matthai, and Griesbach ; who have collated near five hundred Mss. from all nations and of all ages from the fourth century, as well as all the ancient versions and Fathers. Hence we have at present, materials for nearly an authentic edition of the sacred scriptures. This has long been desired by the learned world. For it, every truly sincere lover of the sacred Volume most ardently prays, as an object of the greatest magnitude and importance to the Christian world.—*Quando erit desiderium nobis ?*

RECEIVED TEXT.

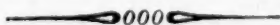
That edition of the Greek Testament, which proceeded from the celebrated press of the Elsevirs at Leyden 1624, has been called the Received Text; and has been scrupulously printed word for word, during the last two centuries. It has been regarded with superstitious veneration as containing the very words of inspiration, which nothing short of impiety would dare to alter. But now a flood of light having broken forth from the discoveries and labors of the two last centuries, we have fully ascertained that the Received Text in many places is nothing but corruption and fraud, canonized by ignorance and superstition! At the invention of Printing great ignorance prevailed in literature and religion, hence the best helps had they been at hand, would not likely have been used, and the first editions, taken from only a few late Mss. corrupted by a thousand transcribers, must have been extremely imperfect. The first edition of Erasmus is indeed the *editio princeps* of the Greek text. It was prepared by Erasmus at the request of Froben, a printer at Basle, in a very hasty manner from four Mss. one containing only the Gospels, a second the Acts and Epistles; and a third only the Apocalypse. The three constituting only one Ms. of the New Testament, modulated by some other documents but more especially by hasty and erroneous conjecture, formed the first edition of the Greek Testament. Mill fixes the age of his largest Ms. to the thirteenth century, and Wetstein, adjudges the other to the fifteenth! But what is worst of all, Erasmus departed from his Ms. in 180 places. The oldest Ms. supposed to be written in the tenth century, was scarcely used at all by Erasmus, who thought it to be corrupted by the vulgate. Even Erasmus himself acknowledges the printers altered the press without his knowledge, and sometimes contrary to his direction. Indeed it was impossible for Erasmus to pay much attention to the collection of materials or work of the press, for he was superintending an edition of Jerome's works at the same time; and a Latin version of the New Testament. Jocosely speaking of the hasty production, he says in one of his letters, I have just escaped from confinement as Basle, where I have performed the work of six years in eight months! In the second edition he changed the reading in four hundred places, but Mill says in seventy for the worse. The third, fourth and fifth editions made no improvement on the second. The Complutensian edition was made also from a few Mss. of the thirteenth and following centuries; and Stephens' edition in 1550 follows Erasmus as if by a blind impulse, even against the authority of all his own Mss. though he quotes superior authority in above an hundred places. Wetstein declares Stephens differs scarcely twenty times from Erasmus in all the Gospels and Epistles.

Beza possessed invaluable materials, but they were all lost in his

hands ; for deficient in critical ability, and blinded by theological prejudice, he was guided by what he called the analogy of faith, more than by his Mss. This edition agrees therefore with Stephens's except in about fifty places, and many of these without authority.—The Elsevir followed the text of Stephens except a few alterations from Beza. Behold the RECEIVED TEXT *revered* principally for its ERRORS !

ENGLISH BIBLE.

King James First, in 1604 issued his commission to fifty four learned men for a new translation of the bible ; which being printed in 1611, by his Majesty's special command, has been therefore called the *authorized version*. This translation still continues in general use both in the British Isles and America, notwithstanding all its imperfections and the strongest remonstrances of the learned and liberal of all Denominations. To all, who are qualified to judge impartially, the following reasons for refusing entire submission to the present English Bible, will prove abundantly satisfactory. 1. Because the translation was made from the *received text*, which was extremely imperfect. 2. The Hebrew and Greek languages were not sufficiently understood by Divines in the reign of King James. 3. The English language has greatly changed during the last two centuries ; and hence the English bible is full of obsolete, unintelligible, and unseemly phrases. 4. The Phraseology of the sacred writers was not properly known or regarded by the translators. In attestation of this opinion, let the collections of Harmer, Paxton, and many others, bear witness. 5. The translators were under the influence of a peculiar creed and despotic control, which induced them to violate the testimony of scripture in many thousands of places. 6. The vast collections of *various readings*, exhibited by Kennicot, De Rossi, and Griesbach, show the original scriptures to have been corrupted in more than ten thousand different places. Hence a new translation of the whole bible becomes necessary, and the labors of the learned, during the last two centuries, by the blessing of God on free inquiry, have been abundantly successful in procuring heavenly stores for such a laudable undertaking.



WESTERN ASSOCIATION.

The Annual MEETING of the "*Western Association of Universalists of the State of New-York*," will be held at the Universalist Church in the town and county of Madison, on the first Wednesday and Thursday in June.

N. B.—Brother Smith will offer for sale at the meeting, 200 Hymn Books, recommended by the Association.—*Price 6s.*

Antichristian Dynasty.

HEAR THE WORD OF THE LORD, YOUR BRETHREN THAT CAST YOU OUT FOR MY NAME'S SAKE, SAID, LET THE LORD BE GLORIFIED : BUT HE SHALL APPEAR TO YOUR JOY, AND THEY SHALL BE ASHAMED.

Isaiah 66. 5.

To the Editor of the Rochester, Magazine, &c.

DEAR SIR,

The Presbyterian Church at West-Bloomfield has recently expelled one of its members as a heretic for embracing, two plain scripture doctrines, the Unity and Benevolence of God, or unitarian Universalism. A succinct detail of facts attending the investigation, decision and closing result will probably be acceptable to your readers.

When the Brother was first called to state his creed, (he proposed for particular reasons which were accepted) that the exposure should be made in writing and directed to the Rev. Dr. Fitch pastor of the church. With a view to try the Question, he proposed to retain his standing in the church and on the trial address them on the subject of *toleration*. The exposure and address are hereto subjoined, and we hope, will meet the approbation of the candid.

After the decision of the church the Rev. Doctor made some severe remarks tending to show, that those who thus believed (as above stated) were wholly *ignorant* of the atonement, that they should be considered *Heretics*; and unless they retracted *those sentiments* (notwithstanding honesty in their belief) they would be forever cast out of the divine presence: ignorantly quoting as proof, Mark 16, 15. Our Brother replied briefly, that although he was not disappointed in the judgment of the church, yet it was another lamentable evidence of the great influence of tradition and education; that from his first argument on toleration, relative to the *conscience*, it was clear that the church had dared to tread on sacred ground; that St. Paul's definition of a heretic, manifested in several passages of his epistles to Titus, particularly Chap. 1. 1—3; 2. 11; 3. 4—9, contains nothing in opposition to *Unitarianism* nor *Universalism*. As to *iguorance of the atonement*, since bare assertions are not proofs, the important question, *What is truth?* was yet undecided. Therefore at present he could not in conscience relinquish his faith: That the denunciation involved thousands of good men; men whose talents, learning and piety, stand high, if not unrivalled in the Christian world, and that such anathemas are wholly inconsistent with any example, left on record by our blessed Saviour or his Apostles; and is in a degree, the same spirit of persecution that has for centuries tormented the christian name; and such menaces ought to

come only from the *mahometan* or *papal* chair. This being the *first* admonition, a few days after, the second was taken, and thus the matter has closed.

Although, Dear Sir, we have forwarded the exposure and address entire, yet our confidence is such in your better judgment, that we shall rest satisfied with having the *whole* published, or *extracts*, as you may think proper; however we shall be pleased with your making *some closing remarks on this important transaction*.

Your brother in the gospel of God our Saviour,

ELIAS D. WIGHT.

Bloomfield, March 24, 1824.

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To the Rev. Dr. Fitch, Minister of the Presbyterian Church, West Bloomfield.

DEAR SIR,

Agreeably to promise, and under a due sense of responsibility to the great head of the church, and esteem for you, and the church under your care, of which I am a member; this communication of my religious belief shall be sincere and candid. Previous to a definite explanation, indulge me in giving a brief memoir of my early impressions; which will tend to show that my present creed has not been formed from a cursory or traditionary view of the subject, but from a long, diligent, persevering and prayerful perusal of the sacred scriptures.

At the age of fifteen I was deeply concerned for my soul, which according to the general opinion, must after death be completely happy or endlessly miserable. I believed myself a sinner; God infinitely holy, and Jesus the only saviour of a sinful world. To obtain remission, I believed faith and repentance necessary: though these conditions involved me in difficulties which I was unable to solve—that Christ in many places of the scriptures should be exhibited as the saviour of the world without any distinction; and yet that the atonement should extend only to an elect member, appeared to me incomprehensible. Hence my mind became unsettled, and remained for years in a state of agitation. I applied myself to the study of the scriptures, theological writers, the ministry of the word, conversation, reflection, and prayer. After many years painful exercise, I perceived that in every system of doctrines denominated orthodox there were not only false premises, but also absurd and inconsistent conclusions.

(*To be Continued.*)